

**To:** Able, Tony[Able.Tony@epa.gov]; Albright, David[Albright.David@epa.gov]; Allenbach, Becky[Allenbach.Becky@epa.gov]; Allnutt, David[Allnutt.David@epa.gov]; Altsman, Diane[Altsman.Diane@epa.gov]; Arcaya, Alyssa[arcaya.alyssa@epa.gov]; Bahrman, Sarah[Bahrman.Sarah@epa.gov]; Baker, Frank[Baker.Frank@epa.gov]; Bathersfield, Nizanna[Bathersfield.Nizanna@epa.gov]; Batiuk, Rich[Batiuk.Richard@epa.gov]; Behl, Betsy[Behl.Betsy@epa.gov]; Benante, Joanne[benante.joanne@epa.gov]; Bergman, Ronald[Bergman.Ronald@epa.gov]; Bethel, Heidi[Bethel.Heidi@epa.gov]; Bielenberg, Ben[Bielenberg.Ben@epa.gov]; Bloom, Judy[Bloom.Judy@epa.gov]; Bose, Laura[Bose.Laura@epa.gov]; Bouma, Stacey[Bouma.Stacey@epa.gov]; Bowman, Janet[Bowman.Janet@epa.gov]; Bragan, Mary Jo[Bragan.Maryjo@epa.gov]; Brown, Robert[Brown.Robert@epa.gov]; Brown, Viney[Brown.Viney@epa.gov]; Butler, Lael[Butler.Lael@epa.gov]; Campbell, Gwen[Campbell.Gwen@epa.gov]; Campbell-Dunbar, Shawneille[Campbell-Dunbar.Shawneille@epa.gov]; Cantor, Howard[cantor.howard@epa.gov]; Capacasa, Jon[Capacasa.jon@epa.gov]; Card, Joan[Card.Joan@epa.gov]; Coate, Carson[Coate.Carson@epa.gov]; Cough, Paul[Cough.Paul@epa.gov]; Curtis, Glenn[curtis.glenn@epa.gov]; DalSoglio, Julie[DalSoglio.Julie@epa.gov]; Danois, Gracy R.[Danois.Gracy@epa.gov]; Davis, Suea[davis.suea@epa.gov]; Deamer, Eileen[deamer.eileen@epa.gov]; Derby, Jennifer[Derby.Jennifer@epa.gov]; Diamond, Jane[Diamond.Jane@epa.gov]; Diaz, Denisse[Diaz.Denisse@epa.gov]; DiPasquale, Nicholas[dipasquale.nicholas@epa.gov]; Dowell, Katharine[Dowell.Katharine@epa.gov]; Dwyer, Stacey[Dwyer.Stacey@epa.gov]; Edward, James[edward.james@epa.gov]; Ellington, Natalie[Ellington.Natalie@epa.gov]; Elliott, Richard[Elliott.Richard@epa.gov]; Eriksen, Stacey[Eriksen.Stacey@epa.gov]; Espinosa, Joyce[Espinosa.Joyce@epa.gov]; Evalenko, Sandy[Evalenko.Sandy@epa.gov]; Farzaad, Marjan[Farzaad.Marjan@epa.gov]; Flournoy, Karen[Flournoy.Karen@epa.gov]; Fontaine, Tim[Fontaine.Tim@epa.gov]; Frey, Sharon[Frey.Sharon@epa.gov]; Galavotti, Holly[Galavotti.Holly@epa.gov]; Garcia, Bert[Garcia.Bert@epa.gov]; Garcia, David[Garcia.David@epa.gov]; Giattina, James[Giattina.Jim@epa.gov]; Gilbertson, Sue[gilbertson.sue@epa.gov]; Gilinsky, Ellen[Gilinsky.Ellen@epa.gov]; Godfrey, Annie[Godfrey.Annie@epa.gov]; Goldstein, Elana[Goldstein.Elana@epa.gov]; Gratz, Jeff[Gratz.Jeff@epa.gov]; Gude, Karen[Gude.Karen@epa.gov]; Guerry, Jacqueline B[Guerry.Jacqueline@epa.gov]; Gullatt, Kristin[Gullatt.Kristin@epa.gov]; Hamilton, Karen[Hamilton.Karen@epa.gov]; Hamjian, Lynne[Hamjian.Lynne@epa.gov]; Harris-Young, Dawn[Harris-Young.Dawn@epa.gov]; Heard, Anne[Heard.Anne@epa.gov]; Henry, Timothy[henry.timothy@epa.gov]; Hestmark, Martin[Hestmark.Martin@epa.gov]; Hisel-McCoy, Sara[Hisel-McCoy.Sara@epa.gov]; Holdsworth, Susan[Holdsworth.Susan@epa.gov]; Honker, William[honker.william@epa.gov]; Horsey, Maurice[Horsey.Maurice@epa.gov]; Hoskie, Sadie[Hoskie.Sadie@epa.gov]; Hyde, Tinka[hyde.tinka@epa.gov]; Johnson, Terri[Johnson.Terri@epa.gov]; Jones, Tim[Jones.Tim@epa.gov]; Kahn, Lisa[Kahn.Lisa@epa.gov]; Kemmerer, John[KEMMERER.JOHN@EPA.GOV]; Kitamura, Louise[Kitamura.Louise@epa.gov]; Klasen, Matthew[Klasen.Matthew@epa.gov]; Klos, Caroline[Klos.caroline@epa.gov]; Kochis, Daniel[Kochis.daniel@epa.gov]; Korleski, Christopher[korleski.christopher@epa.gov]; Kortuem, Patrice[Kortuem.Patrice@epa.gov]; Laidlaw, Tina[Laidlaw.Tina@epa.gov]; Lambert, Wesley[Lambert.Wesley@epa.gov]; Landy, Ronald[Landy.Ronald@epa.gov]; Lape, Jeff[lape.jeff@epa.gov]; Lincoln, Audray[lincoln.audray@epa.gov]; Lopez-Carbo, Maria[Lopez-Carbo.Maria@epa.gov]; Lousberg, Macara[Lousberg.Macara@epa.gov]; Lucco, Millie[lucco.millie@epa.gov]; Lueckenhoff, Dominique[Lueckenhoff.Dominique@epa.gov]; Mann, Michael[Mann.Michael@epa.gov]; Marcus, Pam[marcus.pam@epa.gov]; Martinez, Menchu[martinez.menchu-c@epa.gov]; Mason, Michael[Mason.Michael@epa.gov]; Mattas-Curry, Lahne[Mattas-Curry.Lahne@epa.gov]; Matthews, Joan[Matthews.Joan@epa.gov]; McClain-Vanderpool, Lisa[Mcclain-Vanderpool.Lisa@epa.gov]; McGill, Thomas[Mcgill.Thomas@epa.gov]; McManus, Fred[Mcmanus.Fred@epa.gov]; Minter, Douglas[Minter.Douglas@epa.gov]; Mitchell, Gail[Mitchell.Gail@epa.gov]; Mojica, Nancy[Mojica.Nancy@epa.gov]; Monschein, Eric[Monschein.Eric@epa.gov]; Montgomery, Michael[Montgomery.Michael@epa.gov]; Moore, Linda[Moore.Linda@epa.gov]; Moraff, Kenneth[Moraff.Ken@epa.gov]; Mundrick, Doug[Mundrick.Doug@epa.gov]; Murnan, Wanda[Murnan.Wanda@epa.gov]; Nagle, Deborah[Nagle.Deborah@epa.gov]; Nandi, Romell[Nandi.Romell@epa.gov]; Neftleberg, Traci[Neftleberg.Traci@epa.gov]; Nelson,

Tomeka[Nelson.Tomeka@epa.gov]; Newbold, Amy[Newbold.Amy@epa.gov]; Nguyen, Vinh[Nguyen.Vinh@epa.gov]; Nitsch, Chad[Nitsch.Chad@epa.gov]; Nuhfer, Mark[Nuhfer.Mark@epa.gov]; Olone, Dan[Olone.Dan@epa.gov]; Opalski, Dan[Opalski.Dan@epa.gov]; Orvin, Chris[Orvin.Chris@epa.gov]; Palomares, Art[Palomares.Art@epa.gov]; Patheal-Centenera, Bella[Patheal-Centenera.Bella@epa.gov]; Perkins, Stephen[Perkins.Stephen@epa.gov]; Perrin, Rebecca[Perrin.Rebecca@epa.gov]; Pomponio, John[Pomponio.John@epa.gov]; Potent, Jeffrey[Potent.Jeffrey@epa.gov]; Psyk, Christine[Psyk.Christine@epa.gov]; R8 EPR-EP[R8\_EPREP@epa.gov]; Rathbone, Colleen[Rathbone.Colleen@epa.gov]; Reiley, Mary[Reiley.Mary@epa.gov]; Reynolds, Lori[Reynolds.Lori@epa.gov]; Roberts, Connie[Roberts.Connie@epa.gov]; Robichaud, Jeffery[Robichaud.Jeffery@epa.gov]; Russ, Michael[russ.michael@epa.gov]; Russo, Rebecca[Russo.Rebecca@epa.gov]; Sanelli, Diane[Sanelli.Diane@epa.gov]; Scaggs, Ben[Scaggs.Ben@epa.gov]; Scalia, Kim[SCALIA.KIMBERLY@EPA.GOV]; Sexton-sims, Aisha[Sexton-Sims.Aisha@epa.gov]; Shah, Surabhi[Shah.Surabhi@epa.gov]; Shapiro, Mike[Shapiro.Mike@epa.gov]; Shellhorse, Tracy[Shellhorse.Tracy@epa.gov]; Siedschlag, Gregory[Siedschlag.Gregory@epa.gov]; Simmons, Christopher[simmons.christopher@epa.gov]; Skane, Elizabeth[Skane.Elizabeth@epa.gov]; Slimak, Michael[Slimak.Michael@epa.gov]; Smith, Bernice[Smith.Bernice@epa.gov]; Soscia, Marylou[Soscia.Marylou@epa.gov]; Spence, Sandra[Spence.Sandra@epa.gov]; Stavnes, Sandra[Stavnes.Sandra@epa.gov]; Tarquinio, Ellen[Tarquinio.Ellen@epa.gov]; Taylor, Jori[taylor.jori@epa.gov]; Tedesco, Mark[Tedesco.Mark@epa.gov]; Thomas, Chris[Thomas.Chris@epa.gov]; Thomas, Deb[thomas.debrah@epa.gov]; Tyler, Patti[Tyler.Patti@epa.gov]; vanDrunick, Suzanne[vanDrunick.Suzanne@epa.gov]; VanHaagen, Paula[vanhaagen.paula@epa.gov]; Vetter, Doreen[vetter.doreen@epa.gov]; Videtich, Callie[Videtich.Callie@epa.gov]; Wall, Tom[Wall.Tom@epa.gov]; Wiedeman, Allison[Wiedeman.Allison@epa.gov]; Woo, Nancy[Woo.Nancy@epa.gov]; Wortman, Eric[Wortman.Eric@epa.gov]; Zimmer, Andrea[Zimmer.Andrea@epa.gov]

**From:** Bragan, Mary Jo

**Sent:** Mon 1/26/2015 2:05:45 AM

**Subject:** FW: Hot Issues Newsletter - January 23, 2015

*Don't panic...This week's newsletter is longer than usual since it covers two weeks.*

## Noteworthy Items \_\_\_\_\_

### **EPA, States and Automotive Industry to Reduce Copper in Motor Vehicle Brake Pads.**

EPA, the automotive industry and the states signed an agreement to reduce the use of copper and other materials in motor vehicle brake pads. The Copper-Free Brake Initiative calls for cutting copper in brake pads to less than 5 percent by 2021 and 0.5 percent by 2025. This voluntary initiative also calls for cutting the amount of mercury, lead, cadmium, asbestiform fibers and chromium-6 salts in motor vehicle brake pads. These steps will decrease runoff of these materials from roads into the nation's streams, rivers and lakes, where these materials can harm fish, amphibians and plants. For more information:

[water.epa.gov/polwaste/npdes/stormwater/copperfreebrakes.cfm](http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/npdes/stormwater/copperfreebrakes.cfm). For photos from the signing event: [aasa.pixieset.com/epamou/](http://aasa.pixieset.com/epamou/)

**EPA Launches Finance Center to Improve Community Water Infrastructure and Resiliency.** EPA launched the Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center to help communities across the country improve their wastewater, drinking water and stormwater systems. The center is part of the President's Build America Investment Initiative - a government-wide effort to increase infrastructure investment and promote economic growth by creating opportunities for state and local governments and the private sector to collaborate, expand public-private partnerships, and increase the use of federal credit programs. [For more information, visit here.](#)

**EPA Proposal Strengthens Nation's Preparedness Level and Response to Oil Spills.** EPA is proposing to amend requirements under the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan to improve the nation's ability to plan for and respond to oil spills. This proposal addresses issues raised by the public, responders, government, and industry officials during the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.

For details: [www2.epa.gov/emergency-response/national-contingency-plan-subpart-j](http://www2.epa.gov/emergency-response/national-contingency-plan-subpart-j)

**Agriculture Secretary Announces Funding for 115 Conservation Projects in 40 States.** Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that 115 high-impact projects across all 50 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico will receive more than \$370 million in Federal funding as part of the new USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). New RCPP projects throughout the country will support a wide array of agricultural and natural resource activities, from helping farmers improve their drought resiliency to protecting drinking water supplies. They are also providing habitat for many at-risk species such as sage grouse and supporting the expansion of environmental markets. All of these investments will benefit ranching and farming operations that will in turn help address natural resource needs. A complete list of the projects and their [descriptions is available on the NRCS website.](#)

**USGS Receives Funds for Monitoring Network.** As part of the FY15 CROmnibus package, funding has been made available for a USGS initiative to sustain data collection efforts. The National Groundwater Monitoring Network (NGWMN) has been funded at \$2,600,000. Appropriations language calls on the Survey to provide cost-share grants to states in the form of cooperative agreements to upgrade monitoring networks to national standards and to incorporate wells into the network. To learn more: [cida.usgs.gov/ngwmn/](http://cida.usgs.gov/ngwmn/)

## Recently Released Reports and Toolkits

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## *Connectivity*

**EPA Releases Connectivity Report to Inform its Waters of the U.S. Rule.** EPA's Office of Research and Development released the final science report, *Connectivity of Streams and Wetlands to Downstream Waters*. The report summarizes current scientific understanding about the connectivity of streams and wetlands to downstream waters. The report is based on an EPA review of the literature on the scientific evidence regarding the effects that streams, non-tidal wetlands, and open-waters have on larger. For a copy of the report: [cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/cfm/recorddisplay.cfm?deid=296414](http://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/cfm/recorddisplay.cfm?deid=296414)

### *Climate Change and Resilience*

**NOAA National Sea Grant Resilience Toolkit Released.** Sea Grant recently launched the National Sea Grant Resilience Toolkit - a compilation of tools and resources that have been developed to help local communities become more resilient. This toolkit allows users to learn about tools from across the entire network, giving them the opportunity to adapt tools for their own local needs. Each entry includes a description of the tools, a link for more information, and a point of contact. The toolkit combines more than 100 tools and will be updated as more tools are created. To access the toolkit, visit: [seagrant.noaa.gov/WhatWeDo/ResilienceToolkit.aspx](http://seagrant.noaa.gov/WhatWeDo/ResilienceToolkit.aspx)

**US Climate Resilience Toolkit Now Available.** The US Climate Resilience Toolkit is now available online to help manage climate-related risks and improve resilience to extreme events. The toolkit is comprised of a five step process that users can follow to initiate, plan, and implement projects to become more resilient to climate-related hazards, as well as case studies, a catalog of resources, maps, and more. The toolkit also provides federal-based information and decision support resources to help address challenges in the areas of coastal flood risk and food resilience. Over time, the toolkit will expand to include information from state and local governments, businesses, academia, and NGO's; and address other topics such as human health, ecosystem vulnerability, water resources, energy supply and infrastructure. [toolkit.climate.gov/](http://toolkit.climate.gov/)

**EPA Climate Ready Water Utilities Initiative Releases Storm Surge Inundation Map.** The Storm Surge Inundation Map is an interactive map that illustrates the current worst-case storm surge and inundation scenarios on the American Gulf and Atlantic coasts, including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The map combines data layers from FEMA 100 and 500 year flood maps as well as NOAA's Sea, Lake, and Overland Surge from Hurricanes (SLOSH) and National Hurricane Center's coastal county hurricane strike maps. [Explore the map on EPA's website.](#)

### *Groundwater and Drinking Water*

**USGS Releases New Groundwater Quality Reports on the Nation's Principal Aquifers.**

The USGS has released nine new reports as part the National Water-Quality Assessment (NAWQA) Program's Principal Aquifers Series entitled, "The Quality of Our Nations Groundwater. These reports share the findings of groundwater quality assessments from 6,600 wells in regionally extensive aquifers that supply most of the nation's drinking water, irrigation, and other uses. The reports show where, when, why, and how specific conditions, actions, and use of water affect groundwater quality across the aquifer and lead to science-based implications for assessing and managing the resource. For more information about the NAWQA series and to read the reports: [pubs.usgs.gov/circ/1360/](https://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/1360/)

### **New Clean Water Action Reports on Lack of SDWA Protections for Oil and Gas**

**Development.** Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund (CWA/CWF) have just published two new reports that discuss the inadequacies of the Aquifer Exemption Program and the Underground Injection Control (UIC) Class II Program to protect drinking water from certain oil & gas and uranium mining activities. These two publications highlight Congressional and regulatory exceptions to these programs and share CWA/CWF research findings. Report One, *Aquifer Exemptions: A First-Ever Look at the Regulatory Program That Writes Off Drinking Water Resources for Oil, Gas and Uranium Profits*, highlights gaps in documentation of decisions and in oversight of this program, and provides recommendations to EPA. Report Two, *Regulating Oil & Gas Activities to Protect Drinking Water: The Safe Drinking Water Act's Underground Injection Control Program*, finds that the program is at risk for prioritizing fossil fuel extraction over protecting potential drinking water sources, and provides suggestions for scrutinizing various aspects of the UIC program. For more information, visit the web site at: [cleanwateraction.org/drinkingwateratrisk](https://cleanwateraction.org/drinkingwateratrisk)

### **Workplace Policies**

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#### *Hiring...*

**OPM to Revise Veterans Hiring Policies.** OPM has issued proposed rules, in the December 29 Federal Register, to update veterans preference policies. One change obligates agencies to grant veterans preference to an applicant who is still on military duty but who submits a certification of an expected honorable discharge within 120 days. Another grants preference in cases where a veteran was discharged by reason of sole survivorship, which is granted in certain family situations. OPM also aims to clarify procedures for ranking of candidates in category rating, a system in which veterans preference applies differently than in the "rule of three" method that it largely replaced in recent years; and more clearly state the requirements for the order of consideration in excepted service hiring. For full story: [fedweek.com/federal-managers-daily-report/opm-revise-veterans-hiring-policies/](https://fedweek.com/federal-managers-daily-report/opm-revise-veterans-hiring-policies/)

#### *Leave...*

**Leave Memo Both Less, More Than It Appears.** A White House memo telling agencies to grant employees up to 30 days of advanced sick leave for certain child-related purposes goes farther in some ways and not as far in others than has been reported by online and print publications...The memo does not create new paid leave; employees have been allowed to use sick leave (and annual leave) for purposes related to pregnancy, childbirth and adoption under long-standing policy...What is different is that under traditional practice, grants of advance leave have been subject to agency discretion. The memo essentially makes advanced leave mandatory when an employee makes a request for those specified purposes, regardless of the person's current leave balance, except in rare cases where law would prevent it. The sick leave advancement policy primarily will benefit those with relatively short federal service... Separately, President Obama called for passage of legislation creating six weeks of paid parental leave for childbirth, adoption or foster placement. Some of the reports on the memo incorrectly stated that he created an entitlement to administrative leave; in fact, Congress would have to approve such an entitlement and it has not done so with similar bills for more than a decade. For the full articles: [fedweek.com/fedweek/leave-memo-less-appears-2/](http://fedweek.com/fedweek/leave-memo-less-appears-2/) and [fedweek.com/fedweek/administrative-leave-idea-requires-legislation/](http://fedweek.com/fedweek/administrative-leave-idea-requires-legislation/)

### *Travel...*

**Mileage Rate Rises to Match IRS Number.** GSA has raised the mileage reimbursement rate for federal employees who use privately owned vehicles on official business from 56 to 57.5 cents per mile, effective for calendar year 2015. GSA said in a December 30 Federal Register notice that it sets the rate by reviewing the IRS figure "as well as conducting independent automobile, motorcycle and aircraft studies that evaluate various factors, such as the cost of fuel, the depreciation of the original vehicles costs, maintenance and insurance, and/or by applying consumer price index data." The notice also adjusted several associated rates: for using a motorcycle, 54.5 cents per mile; for using a privately owned airplane, \$1.29 a mile; and for using a privately owned vehicle when a government owned automobile is authorized, 23 cents per mile. For original story: [fedweek.com/federal-managers-daily-report/mileage-rate-rises-match-irs-number/](http://fedweek.com/federal-managers-daily-report/mileage-rate-rises-match-irs-number/)

### **In the News** \_\_\_\_\_

**Latest EPA Buyouts Trimmed Nearly 200 Employees.** *By Robin Bravender, E&E Reporter.* EPA shed nearly 200 staffers in the latest round of buyout and early retirement offers...A total of 196 employees accepted the incentives to leave EPA's ranks... Buyout and early retirement offers were made to employees in EPA's Office of Administration and Resources Management, Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, Office of Research and Development, Office of Water, Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response, Office of Air and Radiation, and Office of International and Tribal Affairs. Workers in two regional offices -- the New York-based Region 2 office and the Chicago-based Region 5 office -- also received offers. About 540 staffers left EPA under the first round of buyouts and early outs last year. For the complete story: [eenews.net/greenwire/2015/01/15/stories/1060011753](http://eenews.net/greenwire/2015/01/15/stories/1060011753)

**Infrastructure Costs Gobbling Up U.S. Funding for Core Research. *By Emily Yehle, E&E Reporter.***

Ocean research should focus on sea-level risks, forecasting natural disasters and global warming's impacts on marine ecosystems, the National Research Council said in a recently released report. The report sets out eight priorities for the next decade that emphasize the need for funding and cross-agency collaboration. Specifically, it warns that infrastructure costs are beginning to overshadow research funding amid flat and declining federal budgets... Beyond research objectives, the report recommends specific steps to ensure that researchers have sufficient funding. It paints a somewhat bleak picture of the current situation, pointing to infrastructure costs that have eaten into research money. For the entire story:

[eenews.net/greenwire/2015/01/23/stories/1060012194](http://eenews.net/greenwire/2015/01/23/stories/1060012194)

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**Senate Environment & Public Works Committee Outlines Priorities for 2015. *From the ASDWA Newsletter.*** Senator James Inhofe (R-OK), new chair of the Senate Environment & Public Works Committee has signaled his legislative priorities for 2015. Priority 1 will be to pass a long-term highway transportation bill. The second priority focus for the Committee will be to engage in oversight of various environmental. For EPA, this will mean a sharpened focus on proposed greenhouse gas regulations, Clean Water Rule, methane emissions, ozone standards, and the Administration's climate activities. Inhofe has also announced that there will be a joint hearing (probably in early February) with the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee to examine issues surrounding the Clean Water Rule. He also expects that the Committee will provide input as part of the FY 16 Appropriations process in an effort to rein in some of EPA's regulatory approaches. Additional Committee efforts will focus on reforming the Endangered Species Act; and reauthorizing TSCA and the Brownfields Program.

**Agency Watchdog Probing Employee Text Messages. *By Robin Bravender, E&E Reporter.***

U.S. EPA's watchdog office is launching an investigation into employees' use of text messages for official business. The EPA Office of Inspector General recently notified the agency that -- at the request of a House GOP lawmaker -- it plans to scrutinize whether EPA followed the law and adequately preserved texts used for official business... The watchdog also plans to investigate whether EPA has policies and procedures in place to determine which texts must be preserved and whether the agency implemented processes to respond to congressional and Freedom of Information Act requests involving agency employees' text messages. For more:

[eenews.net/greenwire/2015/01/15/stories/1060011749](http://eenews.net/greenwire/2015/01/15/stories/1060011749)

## Upcoming Events

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**January 27. Research and Implementation of Arsenic Removal Technologies at Small Community Water Systems Webinar.** This presentation will provide an overview of the wide variety of challenges faced by small water systems to implementing arsenic treatment for compliance with the Arsenic Rule of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

**Time: Tuesday, January 27 from 2:00 to 3:00 pm Eastern**

For more information: [www2.epa.gov/water-research/research-and-implementation-arsenic-removal-technologies-small-community-water](http://www2.epa.gov/water-research/research-and-implementation-arsenic-removal-technologies-small-community-water)

**January 28. Urban Soil Hydrology and Applications to Improve Demolition Practice Webinar.** EPA's Residential Demolition Bid Specification Development Tool highlights environmental issues associated with residential demolitions and lists specific practices that can be incorporated into the demolition contracting process to achieve better environmental outcomes. The use of environmentally beneficial demolition practices can result in long- and short-term environmental benefits and set the stage for adding value to vacant lots.

**Time: Wednesday, January 28 from 12:00 to 1:00 pm Eastern**

For more information: [www2.epa.gov/water-research/urban-soil-hydrology-and-applications-improve-demolition-practice-webinar](http://www2.epa.gov/water-research/urban-soil-hydrology-and-applications-improve-demolition-practice-webinar)

**January 29. Green Infrastructure and Flood Resiliency-Land Use Management as an Adaptation Strategy in the Built Environment Webinar. *Sponsored by EPA and Antioch University New England.***

This webinar will address assessment, planning, and adaptation to better prepare for the next emergency; and how to sustainably manage flooding and stormwater in order to maintain human health and a vibrant local economy. Participants will gain knowledge about the latest innovative approaches to understand the effects of inland flooding and apply low-impact development, site design, and smart growth practices at different scales of implementation. There will be references to pioneering hydrology-based, sub-watershed approaches that have shown mitigation potential not only for stormwater and flooding, but for degradation in water quality.

**Time: Thursday, January 29 from 12:00 to 1:00 pm Eastern**

For more information, visit: [communityresilience-center.org/](http://communityresilience-center.org/)



**February 3<sup>rd</sup>. ACWA-GWPC-ASDWA Webinar: “CWA-SDWA Toolkit Introduction”.** This is the first of four webinars in a series that is being conducted through a joint effort of the Association of Clean Water Administrators (ACWA), the Ground Water Protection Council (GWPC), and the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA). This first webinar will introduce participants to the CWA-SDWA Toolkit entitled, "Opportunities to Protect Drinking Water Sources and Advance Watershed Goals through the Clean Water Act: A Toolkit for State, Interstate, Tribal, and Federal Water Program Managers." The toolkit was developed by a workgroup that included many state, EPA Headquarters, and EPA Regional representatives from clean water, drinking water, and ground water programs. During subsequent webinars, speakers will provide more detailed information about each section of the toolkit and share case examples from a variety of states.

**TIME: Tuesday, February 3 from 1:00pm – 2:30 pm Eastern**

To join the webinar log in at: [acwa.adobeconnect.com/cwa-sdwa\\_toolkit\\_intro/](http://acwa.adobeconnect.com/cwa-sdwa_toolkit_intro/) (Registration not required. Just log in as a guest at the time of the webinar.)

**February 5<sup>th</sup>. Webcast on Lessons Learned from Ten Years of Watershed Assessment in USDA’s Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP).** Renown agricultural research experts will share some of the key findings from the CEAP Watershed Assessments on how the suite, timing and spatial distribution of conservation practices influence and impact local water quality outcomes. Topics covered will include nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment loss reduction and various approaches to targeting, as well as overall lessons learned from the CEAP Watershed Assessments.

**Time: Thursday, February 5<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 to 3:00 pm Eastern**

To register: [epa.gov/watershedwebcasts](http://epa.gov/watershedwebcasts)

**March 2-5<sup>th</sup>. Fifth Interagency Conference on Research in the Watersheds. *Trident Technical College, Charleston, South Carolina*.** The conference features 49 speakers in eight concurrent session focusing on a wide range of watershed topics such as water quality and contaminants, coastal watersheds, experimental watershed studies, as well as watershed assessment, management and restoration. The poster session will also include an additional 44 presenters on technical watershed research and management topics. Register by February 16<sup>th</sup> at: [hydrologicscience.org/icrw5/](http://hydrologicscience.org/icrw5/)

**Previous Webinar Available “States and WARNs –Working Together”.** On December 17th, ASDWA’s Security Committee hosted a webinar to showcase how five states -- California, Utah, New Hampshire, New York and Florida -- support, interact with, and sustain their state’s WARN (Water/Wastewater Agency wide Response Network). If you were not able to participate in the webinar, ASDWA has posted a recording of the event, a quick summary the discussions (including Q&A), and individual presentations. Materials available at: [asdwa.org/security](http://asdwa.org/security)

Thanks,

Mary Jo

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Mary Jo Bragan, OW Lead Region Coordinator

EPA Region 4/61 Forsyth Street/Atlanta, GA 30303

404-562-9275 (w) / [bragan.maryjo@epa.gov](mailto:bragan.maryjo@epa.gov)